The Facts about Car Idling

The following information and recommendations are compiled from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov).

An idling car is one that is not being driven but whose engine is still running. Idling is often unavoidable in traffic, but *voluntary* idling occurs when cars are left running while parked, standing, or waiting in drive-through lines. People often don't realize that idling has several negative effects on health, the environment, and themselves:

- **Air Pollution**
  Voluntary idling increases the amount of preventable pollution released into our air. Cars produce several air pollutants that contribute to environmental problems such as urban smog, air toxics, and climate change, and health problems such as asthma, respiratory and heart disease. Children are especially vulnerable to air pollution because they breathe twice as much as adults.

- **Wasted Fuel and Money**
  Idling wastes fuel and money. *ALL* cars, trucks, and SUVs get 0 mpg while idling, regardless of their fuel efficiency while driving. Larger vehicles usually waste more fuel than smaller ones.

- **Engine Wear-and-Tear**
  Idling for long periods, especially in cold weather, can actually cause excessive wear or even damage the engine.

MYTH: Restarting the engine uses more gas and causes more pollution than idling.

FACT: Modern engines require much less fuel at startup than most people think. Idling for only **30 seconds** uses up more fuel than restarting the engine. If you expect to idle for more than **30 seconds**, turn off the engine and then restart (except in traffic, of course). You will save fuel and prevent pollution by avoiding long idles. For example, instead of idling in bank and restaurant drive-through lines, park your car and go inside.

MYTH: Engines need to warm up with a long idle period, especially in cold weather.

FACT: Modern cars need little warm-up time and are most efficient when being driven. Engines require no more than **30 seconds** of warming-up, followed by driving at moderate speed for the first few minutes. In fact, idling in cold weather causes excessive wear on the engine.